868 Parents teach their children the trades that they themselves know: forging, wood sculpture, the weaving of mats and baskets, pottery making, etc.

867 With respect to ethics, the children learn a great deal from experience, but parents do not fail to teach them rules of politeness, decorum, good breeding, and the great principles of social relations. As in Europe, however, there are degrees of concern or indifference in this realm. The moral code taught is the one the parents themselves practice. It is centered above all on family and society; respect toward members of the family, mutual assistance, respect for the welfare of others, fear of the opposite sex, etc. But all of it has a naturalistic basis: the reason given for adherence to such precepts is limited to the unpleasant consequences [509] that would otherwise result. Reprimands and even corporal punishments for infractions are not unknown. But they are chiefly due to exasperation and therefore mixed with anger and without any continuity or consistent idea. Once the anger has passed the threats remain sterile. For punishment the parents
● [421] resort chiefly to blows, but other penalties are also common. For instance, one of our catechists when he was young (between 1880 and 1895) had removed a little bird trapped in a snare belonging to one of his cousins. As soon as his father heard what he had done, he gave the youngster a good scolding and made him go to bed without supper.

As a girl approaches puberty, her mother teaches her the rights and duties of a married woman. She teaches her how to behave and conduct herself in order to be a good wife and mother. She does this so that her daughter may find a good husband, and so that the union may be stable and not produce too many palavers or trouble.

Formerly children were not allowed to see the dances of adults. They were chased away and had to amuse each other. This was an excellent means for preserving morality among the youth and retaining their respect for their elders. Therefore it is most regrettable that it has been abandoned.

882 When the children reach puberty, they no longer like to sleep in their parent's home. The parents do not send them away, but on the other hand, they do not oppose this desire on the part of young people which, they say, springs from a feeling of modesty. The boys go one way, the girls another; for example, they may appropriate an unoccupied hut belonging to their father or go to close relatives, or they may try and find a place in quarters occupied by a group of boys or girls. If no house is available, the boys band together to build a hut which they share. Nowadays they begin very early [510] to build individual huts or one for two, in order to thus enjoy a greater freedom.

868 On the trees in the forest one finds a kind of hard mushroom called lotikitela. When a child begins to speak, the mushroom is placed between his teeth, so that he will bite into it and thus learn not to express himself thoughtlessly but to hold back his words (-tikitela) and think before speaking.

One can often observe parents and other persons actively helping children to express themselves correctly, especially in correcting mistakes, pronunciation, and errors with regard to proper nouns, by giving them the proper words and even explaining grammatical forms and subtle distinctions between certain terms. "This is how it must be said; that means something else. This plant is called thus and so, etc."

● 861 Therefore, although a Nkundó child is very free to spend his days as he pleases and, perforce, learns many things through personal experience, it would be wrong to say that his parents are not interested in his education and do not contribute to it. They participate actively by their advice, their explanations, and their demonstrations. Needless to say, their role is neither as important nor as continuous as in many civilized societies. Besides it is very difficult, and often unfair, to compare our people's situation with that of Europeans; the difference in circumstances is too great. But we must point out in all fairness that the Nkundó do make efforts in this realm, although the results are hardly apparent with respect to moral education (1), because there are many flaws, gaps,

1. We will say no more about material and economic education, which can not be criticized.

efforts, and obstacles, the most important of which should be considered. [511]

1) First of all education begins too late. To be crowned with success such efforts should be begun as early as possible. And among the Nkundó, a child is not considered old enough to be given lessons or punished until he is fairly well developed (usually at about six years of age).

2) In their pedagogy the Nkundó do not take into account the relationship between cause and effect with respect to the acquisition of bad habits. They react against censurable actions, but they do not attack their roots by opposing the beginning of vices. Thus, they do not understand that if the desires and whims of a small child, for example with respect to nursing, demands for food, the desire to be fondled and carried, etc., are continually satisfied, he will necessarily become an unruly little tyrant who wants to be satisfied in every way.

3) The Nkundó have no systematic idea or consistency in correcting faults and punishing misbehavior; as we have seen, punishment by Nkundó parents most frequently takes the form of sudden explosions of anger and indignation. The purpose of the punishment is not apparent to the child, and the only result obtained is a fear of being chastised. There may be fortunate exceptions, but these are surely extremely rare. Generally, parents follow the impulse of the moment, and the youngsters take advantage of these impulses. The gravity of such a situation stands out clearly in the following case history: Isia (now a man between thirty and forty) was amusing himself by shooting arrows. One of his father's wives, named Bokeli, appeared, accompanied by Bakutu, a young sister of Isia. The youngster reproved Bokeli: "What are you doing here with my sister? If she is hit by an arrow, the palaver will be yours." The woman insulted him. The boy threatened to shoot at her. Thereupon his father, Bolfidfi, intervened, saying, "If you dare touch my wife, I [512] will kill one of your mothers." (1) Isia's retort was to shoot at Bokeli saying,

1. That is, either his mother (Bonfinanya) or her sister and ebfia, Basfini.

"Well, then, let them both die." (2) His father wanted to catch

2. That is, if my mother is to die, you, Bokeli, will die also (a common retort in such cases).

him, but the agile youngster fled to the forest. As he did not return home that evening, everyone became frightened. Finally, he answered the call of his aunt Bongóla and came back. The moral of the story: everyone was happy to see him again, and there was no more question of punishment. (3)

3. According to the Nkundó jurisprudence, the wrong was actually on Bokeli's side because she started the insults. But the reaction was excessive, nevertheless.

An even stronger example is that of Esalé (now between forty and fifty), who was insulted by his mother Bonola for some misdeed. He shot at her and wounded her on the forehead. To flee his father's anger he withdrew to the forest. He was called and came back. That ended the palaver. (4)

4. As a matter of fact, a Nkundó fable teaches that a person should not be left under the sway of rage, especially if he has withdrawn to the forest, because he may become a misanthrope as a result, producing even more deplorable consequences (vagrancy, murders, etc.).

4) There is a lack of cooperation between the spouses. Each one acts on his own initiative and out of his own indignation. More than that they contradict each other; one will punish the child, and the other tries to protect it, either directly or indirectly, by reprimanding the spouse.

Women in particular are very intolerant of having anyone touch their children, even the child's own father. This fact can be attributed in part to a lack of any unity of feeling between the spouses and partly to maternal love, which is purely natural, psycho-physiological, so to speak.

Measures taken against a child who has misbehaved often result in serious domestic quarrels, sometimes followed by the wife's flight to her family. Such was the case of Bakutu b'Ofongé (born around 1880). His father, Boléngé, had forbidden him to peel a piece of sugar cane [512] in a clumsy and wasteful manner. The boy did not want to listen to reason. Next thing you know he had cut a deep wound in his finger. "What did I tell you?" shouted the father. "Now you are punished for your disobedience." Thereupon the mother, Mbélé, flew into a rage. "Oh! You are killing my child!" and so on. She rolled up her mats, took her baskets on her back, and took the path leading to her village.

Nkundó casuistry includes the case -- which seems hypothetical or at least belonging to the past, for I have never known or heard of a real instance -- of a man taking revenge on his wife for having insulted his child. His revenge took the form of ordering the child to go and kill a goat belonging to her mother's clan, thus obliging the child to pay an indemnity to the owner, so that the mother finds herself thus being punished by her family. The father's right to do this is recognized in Nkundó jurisprudence. But from the standpoint of education the solution is far from ideal.

f) The influence of the kin group also plays a great role. The Nkundó are very much attached to their families. Their children are at home everywhere in the group. A wife has very close ties to her own family. The father's brothers and sisters are a child's "fathers"; his maternal aunts and uncles are his "mothers." A child's real father does not do much to defend his son against scolding or punishment from his own close kin but does not readily accept the intervention of his wife's family, and vice versa. And again the child can take advantage of such dimension. The situation occurs quite frequently although there are many exceptions.

6) The parent's opposition to reprimands by strangers is even greater as a general rule. They try to cover up and justify the faults of their progeny, whom they will fiercely defend. The children naturally know all this and take advantage of it.

7) The polygamous household, with all its rivalries among co-wives, cannot but accentuate all such [514] adverse effects on the children's education. The conflicts, spiteful comments, palavers, etc., are easily extended to the children. And each wife defends her own.

8) Everything is public; there are no secrets; everything is known, seen, and heard. People do not restrain themselves and the presence of children does not stop the flow of insults and obscenities which anger provokes. The young people see many things it would be better for them not to know. They are present at domestic quarrels and are witnesses to dissensions. All this is increased by life outdoors, in the street, and by the thinness of partitions.

9) Another factor is added nowadays: the facility of communications and the presence of European stations. Boys can always run away and find shelter with the Whites or their native employees. The girls seek out kinswomen who live at such stations, even though they must help a little with the housework, in the hope of later enjoying a greater freedom and living in luxury. Parental influence and authority are naturally weakened as a result.

10) Finally, Nkundó education lacks any solid basis, any religion or religious morality. Everything is based on natural, physical fear: the fear of punishments (physical or based on superstition), harmful consequences of bad actions (palavers, difficulties, fines, indemnities, sometimes the shame of being caught -- as in theft). It is especially this lack of religious motivation that makes their moral education bear so little fruit. As the Nkundó are accustomed to this imperfect state, they do not feel the need for such a foundation. That is why it is so difficult to instill any moral conscience into them. The patient and perservering action of the great Christian truths with their institutions for moral formation (uninterrupted preaching, confession, prayer) are needed to endow